

The Stinson Beach Progressive Club

STINSON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

January 11, 1965

Senator Fred S. Farr
State Capitol
Sacramento, California

Re: Freeways

Dear Fred:

I read with interest the newspaper accounts of your committee's recent hearings in San Francisco, and if a transcript becomes available, would appreciate a copy.

Some reform in freeway routing procedure certainly is in order; not reform in the sense of throwing the rascals out, nor reform in the sense of fiscal irregularities. But reform in the sense of making the highway authorities more responsive to the changing needs and desires of the people.

On December 18th, on behalf of the Marin Federation of Improvement Clubs, I appeared at a day-long forum held by our legislators (Sen. Jack McCarthy, Assemblyman Bill Bagley and Congressman Don Clausen) outlining our views on this problem. At the risk of being boorish, I'll go over some of that ground here.

Certainly one of the more persistent sources of complaint with the processes of state government is the manner in which new routes are adopted for highways and freeways. Undoubtedly there are many route adoptions that come about painlessly; it is also true that there are quite a few that come into being accompanied by widespread dissatisfaction. From San Francisco to Sacramento from Monterey to Malibu, from Laguna Beach to Stinson Beach, to say nothing of Beverly Hills, come reports of route adoptions that are far from painless.

Criticism seems to center about securing a greater voice for local officials in freeway routing, and about ~~securing a greater~~ routings that tend to destroy the very values that create the need for the freeway.

Historically, control over highway construction was in the hands of local authorities, but this gave way over the years, because of its obvious weaknesses, to centralized control, vested in the Highway Commission. Now if we could somehow be sure that only men endowed with great wisdom, knowledge and breadth of vision, and much time to devote to highway matters would serve on the Commission, I doubt that there would be any "freeway revolts". Unfortunately, such men are few in number, and hard to find.

Hence we try to set up ground rules so that our highway affairs can be properly directed, even by ordinary people. And from time to time it becomes evident that the ground rules should be changed. We believe this is such a time, and recommend the following changes:

- 1) Provide the California Highway Commission with an independent staff to be responsible for reviewing the recommendations of the Division of Highways, communities, and other interested groups on an impartial basis. This staff should include people competent in various fields including planning, architecture and landscaping as well as traffic safety and engineering.
- 2) Further divorce the Highway Commission from the Division of Highways by removing the Administrator of the Highway Transportation Agency and the Director of Public Works as members, as it is in the nature of things that they will tend to defend, instead of judge, proposals coming up from the Division of Highways.
- 3) Diminish the conclusive presumption that highway use is the highest and best use of land so that other than highway values may be considered in certain instances such as when a highway is proposed through a park, harbor or other area of substantial public value.
- 4) Provide the Division of Highways with people competent in assessing community values so that the intent of Sec. 75.5 of the Streets and Highways Code may be fulfilled, rather than given little more than lip service.
- 5) Provide assurance that preliminary location and design recommendations which cities and counties may choose to submit will be seriously considered by the Division of Highways and together with its own recommendations submitted to the Highway Commission.
- 6) Direct the Division of Highways to furnish scale models of proposed freeways complete with reasonable indication of the location and design of interchanges, etc., sufficiently far in advance of public hearings so that local groups and local governments may have time to properly consider them and arrange for adequate presentations at the hearings.
- 7) Redefine "freeway" in the Streets and Highways Code so that appropriate distinctions are made between the minimal 2-lane road with limited access, the urban freeway and the intercity freeway. The present confused usage of the word "freeway" is detrimental to the development of the state highway system.

We believe the foregoing changes would go far to accomplish the objective of making the Highway Commission and the Division of Highways more responsive to the changing needs and desires of

the people, and would provide for additional local control without jeopardizing the necessary centralized control without which there would be chaos.

Sincerely,

Hugh Dougherty
President

HD:sls

cc: Senator J. F. McCarthy